

Summary of Advocacy Committee Meeting
March 3, 2022 1 pm Eastern

1. Call to Order

Steve Arms called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm Eastern, March 3, 2022. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1.

2. Approval of Minutes

The February 3 minutes need to have the correct date and time in the first section. With this edit, and after a quorum was present, Robin moved and William seconded that the minutes be approved with those corrections noted. Approval was unanimous.

3. Updates

Newsletter

Steve reviewed the status of article assignments, and every author is prepared to submit their article by the March 16 deadline. Aaren noted that an article on the Technical Manager changes was published in the previous newsletter and that the only new information was that the draft language has been handed over to the Quality Management Systems Expert Committee. Jerry will mention this in the credentialing article, and with that, there is no need for another article on the Technical Manager.

Two additional articles were discussed and added to the list – one on the status of the various module revisions and another about the Annual Report. There was consensus that the status of revisions should become a standing sidebar with a link to the updated status page on the TNI website. NOTE: The Annual Report was approved by the Board on March 9, and should be posted to the website by the following week.

Mentor Initiative

No change – there are 9 labs and 8 mentors at present.

FDA LAAF Regulation

Jerry reported that, while NELAP-accredited labs do accredit for bottled water and agricultural source water in some states, the regulation only requires ILAC-recognized labs for testing of these commodities in emergency and outbreak situations, not for routine use. Therefore, no further action will be taken by TNI to have NELAP-accredited labs addressed in this context.

Wastewater Epidemiological Testing

Jerry noted that the Biden administration has requested \$18B additional funding for COVID-19 that would include wastewater surveillance testing. TNI has commented to CDC that the ACIL method checklist is available for the SARS-CoV-2 PCR method and that TNI encourages the use of laboratories accredited by NGABs for this testing. Should wastewater epi testing expand beyond the current levels (and into other pathogens), there might be a grant opportunity that would support assessor training to bring NELAP ABs into accrediting for the PCR methodology used in this type of analyses.

4. Environmental Justice

At the February Board meeting, the Accreditation Council representatives brought their discussion of EPA's environmental justice focus, and request for states to create plans to address issues related to it. After some discussion, the Board agreed to have Jerry bring the topic to the Advocacy Committee for consideration.

Committee members brainstormed possible contributions that TNI could make to improve environmental justice and arrived at the following suggestions:

- Work to ensure that all environmental analytical data which might impact underserved communities is reliable.
- Develop a webcast on how to meet the sampling requirements of the new Lead and Copper Rule, published in December, 2021. This regulation lowers the MCLs and has much more stringent requirements for sampling, and will affect all municipalities. The thinking was that especially the smaller municipalities could benefit from explicit training.
- Find ways to better explain the contents of the required Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR), as many ordinary citizens find them incomprehensible. These were required by the 1996 SDWA amendments.
- Publicize how to contact authorities for suspected drinking water problems, and how to submit samples. Along with this information, create a plain language explanation of what "safe drinking water" actually means. [Citizens want to know their water is "safe", but when asked what they'd like it tested for, they are unable to respond, but will ask for "any contaminants" or to know "what chemicals" are in it.]

Ed. Note: The NELAP AC discussed the topic again at its March 7 meeting, after being briefed by Lynn on the results of Advocacy's discussion, and offered the following thoughts:

- Roughly half of the NELAP ABs (and other agencies in their states) offer information in languages other than English. The language varies according to demographic of the regulated communities (ranging from Vietnamese to Spanish and many other languages). At least one state AB has a program to provide interpreters when needed for lab assessments and another provides translations for its public meeting materials (in regulatory development). It would seem inappropriate for TNI to become involved with these state efforts, although it is helpful to know they exist.
- Florida in particular has some labs where Spanish is the primary language (in Puerto Rico, but also some in-state), but does not offer documents in Spanish and believes that the English documents are well understood. For this reason, FL does not recommend that TNI undertake efforts to provide translations of the TNI Standard – the English language is not considered to be a problem for their labs.
- One suggestion was to develop a Fact Sheet (or perhaps a series of them) addressing the items identified by Advocacy – how to contact authorities, the CCR, the definition of "safe".
- If TNI members who speak languages besides English would be willing, TNI could establish a version of mentoring whereby those familiar with the TNI Standard could be available to discuss the more subtle meanings of words in the Standard with labs (or others) who may not be fully conversant in English. (These are Lynn's words, not the Council's, but the idea came from Florida.)
- The EPA Board Liaison, Eric Graybill, EPA R3, stated that the Information Technology and Geographic Information Systems staff have advised him that they can provide mapping of "underserved" communities or "environmental justice" communities, but that they would require criteria for defining those groups. At present, there is no standard definition, but "we know it when we see it".

Then, on March 9, the Board discussed the topic again, with the thoughts of both Advocacy and the NELAP AC. In the end, the Board concluded that TNI's resources would likely be best spent by using our conferences to facilitate discussions promoting environmental justice throughout the environmental analytical community and its data users.

5. Workplan Review

Jerry is planning to incorporate benefits of TNI membership and becoming an active member in the upcoming mailer to all accredited labs that he will be preparing. This mailer will also mention the availability of the Guidance Documents for the 2016 TNI Standard, as many labs are not aware of the existence of those tools.

The plan for outreach to data users will be taken up after the volunteer plan; there were no additional volunteers for drafting this plan. With this, all of the high priority action items for Advocacy will have either ongoing activities or plans to begin such activities. The lower priority items will continue with current levels of attention (many are ongoing).

6. Five Year Reviews of SOPs and Policies

Draft mark-ups of the three existing Advocacy SOPs and the one Policy were distributed in February, and one committee member submitted comments on several of them. The drafts with the additional comments included were distributed for this meeting, along with a new draft SOP for the Ambassador activity. Once approved, all five will be sent to Policy Committee for review and then to the TNI Board for its opportunity to review them.

Newsletter SOP 1-115 – One additional revision was requested. William moved and Robin seconded that this SOP be approved, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Position Statement SOP 1-118 – Two additional revisions were requested, including that position statements should also have five year reviews. Steve distributed a revised draft after the meeting. The document was not approved, as additional edits may be forthcoming.

Review of the remaining documents will continue at the next meeting. Committee members are invited to review and comment on these at any time up until their approval.

7. New Business

There was no new business. Steve thanked everyone for their attendance, and adjourned the meeting.

8. Next Meeting

The next teleconference meeting is April 7, 2022, at 1:00 pm Eastern. The agenda and documents will be sent in advance of the meeting.

Attachment 1

	Name	Stakeholder Group	Present/Absent
1.	Steve Arms, Chair	Other	Present
2.	Stacie Crandall	Lab	Absent
3.	Zonetta English	Lab	Absent
4.	Marlene Moore	Other and NEFAP	Present
5.	Janice Willey	Federal	Absent
6.	Trinity O'Neal	Lab	Present
7.	Robin Cook	Lab	Present
8.	Sharon Mertens, Vice Chair	Lab	Absent
9.	Teresa Coins	Lab	Absent
10.	Josh Wyeth	PT provider	Present
11.	William Lipps	Other	Present
	Associate Members		
	Kirstin Daigle	Lab	Absent
	Judy Morgan	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	JoAnn Boyd	Lab and FAC	Absent
	Keith Chapman	Other	Absent
	Kim Chamberlain (replacing Andrea Teal)	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Devon Morgan	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Bob Pullano	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Lee Wolf	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Paul Junio	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Lily Sanchez	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Silky Labie	Other	Absent
	Elizabeth Turner	Lab	Absent
	Stephanie Drier	AB	Absent
	Erin Consuegra	Lab	Absent
	Aurora Shields	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Carol Batterton	Other	Absent
	Celeste Crowley	Other	Absent
	Lara Phelps	EPA (Other)	Absent
	Mike Delaney	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Susie Arredondo	Mentor Subcommittee Chair	Absent
	Staff		
	Jerry Parr	TNI ED	Present
	Lynn Bradley	TNI PA	Absent (meeting recorded for minutes)